

It's Up to You

The older you get, the more flashes and floaters you may see. They are usually harmless. But if you suddenly notice more of them, it may be a sign of an eye problem that needs care. Get regular eye exams to be sure that your flashes and floaters are normal and to protect and preserve your vision.



This brochure is not intended as a substitute for professional eye care.

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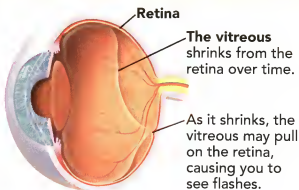
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Flashes and Floaters



What Are Flashes?

Have you ever seen flashes of light, stars, or streaks that aren't really there? A few of these flashes are seen by everyone from time to time. Usually you see them in one eye at a time. Flashes are often caused by the **vitreous** (the gel filling the inside of your eye) pulling on the **retina** (a membrane that lines the inside of your eye).

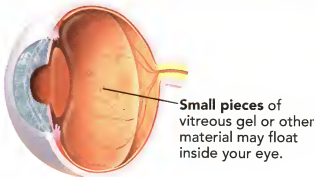


Who Gets Flashes?

As you age or if you are nearsighted (have fuzzy distance vision), you are more likely to see flashes. Sometimes, flashes are signs of other eye problems that need care.

What Are Floaters?

Floaters look like dark specks, clouds, threads, or spider webs moving through your vision. Most people see them once in a while. Floaters may be pieces of gel or other material floating inside your eye. They are usually harmless.



Who Gets Floaters?

The older you get, the more likely you'll notice floaters. Floaters can also be caused by an eye injury or surgery. If floaters appear suddenly or greatly increase in number, they may be a sign of an eye problem that needs care.

Are Flashes and Floaters Serious?

Most often, seeing a few flashes and floaters is normal. Also, some people may notice them for a while after eye surgery. Most flashes and floaters require no treatment. But sometimes they can be signs of a serious eye problem. To find out, you may need an eye exam.



Who Should Get an Exam?

See your eye doctor if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- You have never seen flashes or floaters before and all of a sudden you see a lot of them.
- You've seen some flashes or floaters before, but you have a sudden increase in the number you see.
- You've seen some flashes or floaters for a long time, but they now look different than they used to.
- Flashes or floaters make it hard to do your normal tasks.

Your Eye Exam

Your eye doctor can check your eyes to be sure the flashes or floaters are not signs of a more serious eye problem. At an exam, your doctor will:

- **Ask you questions.** Knowing about your health and your family history of eye problems helps your doctor learn if you're likely to have eye problems.
- **Test your vision.**
- **Examine your eyes.** Your doctor may dilate your pupils and use special instruments to see inside your eyes.

When Do Flashes Need Treatment?

Flashes that appear all of a sudden or greatly increase in number may be a sign of a problem. They may be caused by the vitreous pulling too hard on the retina. This can make the retina tear or detach from the back of the eye. Rapid vision loss can result. Your eye doctor can find the cause of flashes and decide if treatment is needed.

When Do Floaters Need Treatment?

A sudden increase in the number of floaters you see may be a sign of a tear in the retina or of some other eye problem. Over time, a tear can cause the retina to detach from the back of the eye. Your eye doctor can find out what is causing the floaters and suggest a treatment plan, if needed.

